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CHAPTER I. THE FATHER AND THE LOVER OF AN AMER-HE great Transsiberian railway

had progressed as far to the eastward as the Obl, and trains carrying soldiers, convicts, sightseers, rallway constructors, laborers and supplies, with some goods for trade with Manchurla, ran from Moscow.

The possibilities of this immense line of railway made the people of Eurepean Russia gasp. It opened up such a prospect of trade as they had never dreamed of. It gave them a speedy entrance into a region of their domain the crossing of which had formerly occupied months and involved much

'Vhat a change there was from the old sledges or foot trains of convicts to the swiftly moving cars that were drawn by the putting, screaming locomotives, at once a source of delight daughter Frances-is already promisand terror o the people whose territory they crossed!

Among tose who had made this change so remarkable a success was James Gordon, an American engineer, who had charge of much of the ad-

vance work of the road. Gordon was a typical American, ready to go anywhere to build a railway so long as the pay was sufficient to make it an object for him to take his daughter with him.

For Frances Gordon was her father's companion, secretary and comfort.

Left motherless at an early age, she had been brought up by strict aunts till she revolted. Her father had been surveying a route across New Mexico for a new road, fondly and longingly thinking of his daughter in her faraway home in New York, when, lo, the young lady herself, then aged nineteen, put in an appearance mounted on a broncho and accompanied by a half breed guide, to whom she spoke in so authoritative a tone that he bowed before her slightest wish in abject obedience. Since that day Frances Gordon was to be found wherever her father

A year and a half after they had finished the work in Mexico they journeved together to Russia, where Gordon was to take charge of the important part of putting through the railway that was destined to revolutionize the trade and commerce of the world. This great railway had progressed as

far as the Obi river, in the government of Tomsk, Siberia, when a meeting of managers, agineers and government officials was ordered at Moscow. Thither from the Obl journeyed James Gordon and Frances.

Thither also journeyed Nicholas Nesleroy, prince of the empire and governor of the province of Tomsk.

Prince Neslerov was one of the wealthiest nobles of the land, was about thirty-five years of age and had, besides his exalted position as governor of Tomsk, estates in various parts of Russia, particularly a fine one at Graslov, in the government of Perm.

It was after the convention, which had to do with certain concessions and arrangements that were necessary as the road drew near the border of Manchuria, the crossing of certain mountains, the bridging of certain streams, that Mr. Gordon was preparing to return to the Obi, where the western end of his operations was laid, the operations themselves reaching eastward to Lake Balkat in Irkutsk.

To him one day as he sat smoking at his hotel in Moscow came Prince Nesle-

"Good morning, your excellency," said Gordon, who had met the prince at several conferences and now knew him because of the fact that the operations had passed almost across his province. "Glad to see you. When do

you return to Tomsk?" "I shall not be long behind you, my friend," replied the prince. "It is a fact, however, that upon your answer to a certain question which I shall put to you depends many of my acts in the immediate future. M. Gordon, you are

an American." "So I believe: I have beard it hinted at," said Mr. Gordon, wondering what

was coming. "And I am a Russian of the Rus-

"That, too, I believe, is a well au-

thenticated fact." "I am wealthy, a governor of a prov-

ince and shall soon be promoted to a better station. Since you entered the rude territory in the southern part of my government we have met frequently; we have been friends."

"Yes." replied Gordon, rather dublously stroking his chin.

"When you needed protection, my power protected you"

"I believe you." said Gordon, failing

"I merely express myself thus to recall to you my friendship," said the prince, "Now I come to the real errand that brought me here. I love your daughter."

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ey binned Gordon, rousing "Eh!" himself an diffening perceptibly "I repeat, r. that I love your daughter. I want her for my wife, my prin-

coss. A cloud a smake came from Gor-· was looking at a distant don's lips. church tower with eyes that saw no

church. You seem surprised," said the prince. "Is it a matter of surprise that a man should love so noble and beautiful a

young woman as your daughter?" "No," said Gordon slowly, "and if it were I would be used to it by this time. You are not the first."

A slight pallor appeared on the cheeks of Neslerov.

"You do not mean that she-your

"No," answered Gordon. "I don't know that she is, but I do know that you are not the first who has asked for her. Even now you may be too late." "Impossible! I have seen no one of

my-of her own-station near her." "We in America," sald Gordon, "look upon this question of station or rank with different eyes than you do. If a man suited Frances, all the rank, titles and wealth in the world would make no difference.

"She is different from girls in Europe," said the prince, biting his lip. Gordon let out a joyous guffaw.

"I should say she was!" he said. "Different! Why, she is a real, whole, healthy woman. She doesn't smoke



"I love your daughter."

can tell you!"

than ever."

If I thought you were the finest man on ing himself." earth, my wishes would not prevail and it will stand."

has already been made." trary. Frances might love a man and not yet be ready to tell me, although there is nothing secretive about her. We have each other's confidence."

"Still it could not be possible that she would be in love and you not know

"It might, and I will tell you why. She has refused to marry the man I chose for her, the finest young man, in

my estimation, on earth." "Then you have already given your

allegiance to a lover." "I gave it to the lover, but Frances would not marry him. I have no objection to your knowing who it is. It friends. Old Denton was at one time worth a lot of money, but lost it through the rascality of a man he trusted. Jack was a sort of genius and asked me what profession to take up. I told him bridge engineering. He is one of the best at the business now and is only twenty-five. He is out near the Obi. The big iron bridge we are to put across the Obl will be his work."

"It is a fascinating profession your unughter refused him?" "Yes, and it was a great disappointment to me. Jack and she have been friends since they first went to school. He loves her, and his love is the kind that a father likes to see his girl get. to remember the time when he needed . But she won't have him for some rea-

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Said they could never be romantic lovers or some such argument. Couldn't love him because she had known him all her life. Thought it was easier to love a stranger, I suppose, who could bamboozle her.'

"And so it was broken off?" "There was nothing to break off. They were never engaged. She simply refused him. They are friendly when they meet-coolly so. What could I do? She had to have her own way."

"A prosaic friendship such as that is not daugerous," said the prince, "Have chases," I your permission to enter the list?"

"My permission is worthless. You can ask Frances if you like, but it won't do a bit of good. You are too to adorn a higher station than the one rich, and Frances has peculiar notions." "There is some one in whom your

haps you have not heard. It is my duty to inform you, although I myself do not attach much importance to the thing. There is a blacksmith"-"Oh, the blacksmith of Perm!" ex-

claimed Gordon, with a slight coldness In his voice, as though he did not relish having the story told him by the prince. "I am fully aware of all that."

"Does Frances-does your daughter love that man?"

"Goodness, no! She is interested, she likes him and is trying to help him." "Through pity, I suppose, and pity

soon leads to love."

"Well," said Gordon, laughing, "if it does in this case neither you nor I can prevent it. I am sure, however, the girl is fancy free, and, as for him, he is too simple and sensible to look upon their friendship as more than ordinary. cigarettes, gamble at cards and race They met in this way: When the road after titles and wealth. Not my girl, was crossing into Tobolsk, I wanted prince. Frances has a healthy mind some peculiar ironwork done, and she and is as noble as she is good looking. went with me. The stature and strength But she has a mind of her own, if it is and the handsome face of the young healthy, and-well, she is my boss, I ironworker pleased her, and she talked with him. She saw that he was a "You charm me. I am more in love magnificent specimen of a man and fitted by nature to adorn a higher station. "Won't do a bit of good, I tell you. She is trying to assist him in improv-

"You take this very coolly," said the upon Frances to marry you. She will prince. "But, being Russian, perhaps make her own choice, when it is made, our customs are so different that this free intercourse between a girl like "You lead me to believe this choice your daughter and a mere ironworker seems more to me than to you. Then "No. I did not mean that, prince. It you assure me there is nothing more might be so, for all I know to the con- than mere friendship between these

"No. I do not assure you of anything of the kind. I do not know. I think, though, if there was Frances would tell me. If there is, she will have her way; If there is not, the same."

"But if this blacksmith asked her to marry him would you consent?" "I'd have to."

"Do you consider such a thing probable?"

"Prince, I know as little about it as you do. There was only one man-Jack Denton-that I wanted for a son-inlaw, and she won't have him. Now, I know little about her plans, if she has is Denton, the bridge builder. Jack any. She might fall in love with you, Denton was the son of one of my oldest in which case I could not prevent her marrying you. If she does not fall in love with you, I could not compel her to marry you if I would."

"I am pleased at your candor," replied the prince. "I shall soon have an opportunity to speak to her myself. I trust that this conversation will not interrupt our friendship."

"Nonsense! I appreciate the honor you have done my girl. But unless she loves you your case is hopeless." The prince bowed and took his depar-

ture, and Gordon, laughing, turned into the botel. "I'll have to tell her." he said. Then, with a sudden resolve: "No. 1 won't either. I need the friendship of the

prince, and if she knows he wants to marry her who can tell what trouble it may cause?"

As Neslerov was leaving the hotel he met Frances returning from a drive. "! um pleased to see you, Prince Neslerov," she said, offering her hand.

"And I am always glad to meet you, Mlle. Gordon," he replied. "Did you enjoy your drive?" "Yes, but I did not go far. I visited

several bazaars where books are sold See, I have quite a number of pur-"You love books as well as action." "I love them-yes. But these are for

a friend, a young man fitted by nature to which he was born. I send him books, and he studies. You could help daughter is much interested, and per- him, prince. With your power, your influence, you could do much for him. I refer to Vladimir Paulpoff, the black smith of Perm."

"You are very kind to my poor countryman," said the prince, with a smile. To please you I will make it my business to see this blacksmith, and if there is any way in which I may be of use in assisting him along the lines you suggest I shall be pleased to do

She thanked him and passed on into the hotel.

TO BE CONTINUED.]

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